

JUNE, 1943

NINEPENCE

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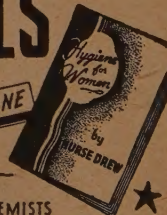
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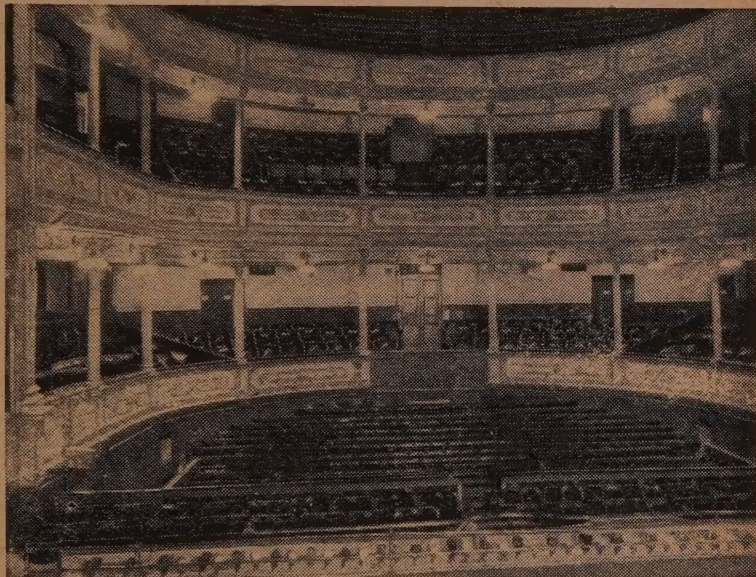
Edited by Frances Stephens

**June, 1943**

**Over the Footlights**

## THEATRE ROYAL, BRISTOL

The Georgian interior of England's oldest theatre, re-opened on May 11th as the first State Theatre in the United Kingdom. Last year an appeal which raised £5,000 saved this historic old theatre from being converted into a warehouse. Now C.E.M.A. — the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, a body administering Treasury funds — has taken a lease of the building, which remains the property of the local Trustees, who will hold it in trust for the city.







**M**OST theatre-lovers heard the broadcast of the opening ceremony which, on May 11th, quietly gave us our first State theatre—the Theatre Royal in bomb-scarred Bristol, dating from 1766. We cannot let the occasion go by without placing on record our deep satisfaction that this event should have taken place in the midst of war. This gem of a theatre with its exquisite proportions might so easily have been put into cold storage until the peace; perhaps as a nation we are at last beginning to value our history, now that so much that was tangible has been destroyed.

*She Stoops to Conquer* appropriately re-opened what Bristol people affectionately call the Old Theatre, and who can say what ghosts hovered in the wings. Surely David Garrick was one, who wrote the prologue for the opening performance, and Sarah Siddons, Edmund Kean, Kemble, and Macready. Dame Sybil Thorndike, speaking the 1943 prologue, made us feel it must be so. May those great ones never have cause to regret this new dedication to one of the great, human arts of peace.

F.S.

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P.602A



# New Shows of the Month

## "They Came to a City"

(Globe)

MR. PRIESTLEY helps to break the spell of current dramatic ineptitude with a play of ideas which, for all its inaction, grips the imagination. In the cold light of reasoning it is but a sermon in dialogue, bearing little relation to our accepted ideas of playcraft, but that doesn't prevent the audience from being visibly moved, largely because the characters who put over the sermon are real, live people in the true Priestley manner.

Having said that, let us pay tribute to the fine acting. It can be no easy task to bring conviction to characters moving about in a world that has far more unreality even than the background in *Outward Bound*. The set, impressive though it is, is nothing more than a Door, a Staircase and a Wall, and even Jacob's angels must have found it none too easy to appear convincing on their ladder, even if it did come straight from Heaven. I had a moment of deep sympathy for the actors on the staircase, but it was fleeting and thereafter I cared only for their past lives and their present reaction to the new Jerusalem that lay behind the Door.

Mr. Priestley has given us a fair cross-section of the kind of beings who are England in Alice and Joe (Coogie Withers and John Clements), the young people for whom a tough life, bad luck and disillusionment have not entirely succeeded in extinguishing faith and hope; in Malcolm and Dorothy Stritton (Raymond Huntley and Renee Gadd), the middle class couple whose marriage is strained to breaking point because the need of "security" has become the breath of life for the woman, and in Cudworth (Norman Shelley) the personification of "hard commerce" whose god has feet of dividents. Then as it were hemming in this group is, on the one side, Mrs. Batley (Ada Reeve), the work-weary office cleaner who has nevertheless made her peace with life and knows more than half its secrets, and on the other Lady Loxfield (Mabel Terry-Lewis) and Sir George Gedney (A. E. Matthews), secure in the knowledge of their eminence in a social order, which, if they did but know it, no longer exists. Phillipa (Frances Rowe), Lady Loxfield's daughter, does know, however, and is only too ready for the new life.

This is the group that debates our modern muddle on the staircase. They are all privileged to glimpse the new Jerusalem for a day, with, as was to be expected, widely differing reactions.

F.S.

## "Present Laughter"

## "This Happy Breed"

(Haymarket)

HERE'S richness! Two new Noel Coward plays, brand new in these revival-infested times, are showing on successive performances at the Haymarket; and the two piquantly contrasting Cowards have the accustomed brilliance, the expected unexpectedness.

*This Happy Breed* is a nine-scene narration of the quiet, but absorbing history of the Gibbons family in their Clapham Common home. Here are the elements typical of so many of the backbone, estimable families of "this little isle"—families that leave no mark, individually or collectively, on recorded history, but whose strivings and aspirations and centuries-old code of decent conduct, constantly observable even through quarrels, contrempts and varying reactions to joy or sorrow, have gone to form "this happy breed" which is the despair of dictators and tyrants.

Coward as father of the Gibbons family, first seen in "the new house" soon after the last war, becomes from time to time the mouthpiece of our various discontents or exultations of the years 1919 to 1939. The Gibbons family is a normal one even in its departures from normality. Father is indulgent but firm; mother is loyal, stable, harassed, respectable to a fault. (Judy Campbell's portrayal is shrewd and subtle, housewifely weariness and resignation thereto ooze from every pore); the children (Billy Thatcher, Jennifer Gray and Molly Johnson) and children-in-law (Dennis Price and Meg Titheradge) show the customary symptoms of growing pains. James Donald's drawing of Billy (the faithful sailor lover of the daughter who craved for more abundant life) is a sure and restrained piece of artistry.

Gwen Floyd's tough old lady with a martyr complex, at daggers drawn with Joyce Carey's silly little, pretty little, surplus sister-in-law similarly afflicted, is but one of a million or so minor household tyrants. Gerald Case, as Bob Mitchell the ageing comrade-in-arms, plays with a sure touch.

Queenie Gibbons' flight with what proves to be a fickle admirer, and her parents' reactions to the blow, are the knot in the plot. The family wedding scene, with many a gentle dig at all such grey-pink-blue functions, and the General Strike scene between sage father and hothead son, are

Continued overleaf



delightful and heart-warming. This wholesomeness, this gentle mood, and this comforting philosophy that escapes the traps of sentimentality and pretentiousness, are all welcome ingredients.

**A**LSO at the Haymarket (alternating with *This Happy Breed*) is Noel Coward's new and mordant farce to end farces, *Present Laughter*. Some of the brilliance of the comedy is attributable to Coward's competent and uncompromising utilisation of those very farce conventions, with seduction scenes, untoward arrivals, transparent deceptions and so on, at which he is so good humouredly tilting.

Garry Essendine (Noel Coward) in a series of fetching dressing-gowns, lemon pyjamas, scarlet slippers (and such-like appropriate accoutrements) is a stupendously popular actor in a luxurious studio, whose theatre charm overflows devastatingly into his private life. His loosely attached wife (Joyce Carey) and his superbly imperturbable and worldly wise secretary (Beryl Measor) do perhaps see through him (when they want to) and he doubtless sees through himself. Histrionics are as essential to him as cigarettes, and the adulation of beautiful women (who must, of course, make no demands). He must incessantly watch and study his build-up, must be ever on the defensive in order to conceal a sentimentality which he feels is not in keeping. And when his *entourage* forget their roles he is not slow to prompt and chasten. His life is all art, he makes a serious undertaking of frivolity, and can take in his stride everything excepting the pervasive, the uncrushable, the ubiquitous, the irrefutable, the unoffendable Roland Maule.

James Donald's Roland Maule is one of the year's outstanding performances. Such a blend of inevitable stance, inevitable mien, inevitable intonation, is a rare and much-appreciated joy. From the moment when this callow but self-confident (for all his protestations of discipleship) young high-brow bursts into the studio, full of a determination not to be dislodged, his every gesture and inflection are just right; we feel Essendine's helplessness before this new brand of persecution and share his shudders as the level, metallic voice perpetrates some fresh offence against the careful structure of the actor's personality and temperament.

Judy Campbell's Joanna is a glorious temptress in virginal white, and Jennifer Gray as Daphne is appealing as the less experienced wooer. Gerald Case, Dennis Price, Gwen Floyd, Billy Thatcher and Molly Johnson complete the cast. The last act finds the farce well in its stride—or gallop—and the climatic assembly of would-be seducers of the idol is furious fun. Don't bother to hunt for the moral!

E.M.H.

## “The Old Foolishness”

(ARTS THEATRE)

**Y**OU may have missed the purely romantic theme from the war-time theatre—not, of course, that the various and unnumbered aspects of the grand passion have been in any way neglected, or supplanted by the martial, the ironical, the getting-down-to-fundamentals-and-no-more-nonsense type of play. But there has no doubt been an understandable absence of the world-well-lost-for-love motive, of the reckless and emotional romanticism of the *Constant Nymph* persuasion.

Well, here it is again, and a refreshment indeed. Paul Vincent Carroll's *The Old Foolishness*, running for three weeks at the Arts Theatre, is a deal of pleasant to-do on the old sweet theme. The Sheeran's farm is capably and unimaginatively managed by the handsome, heavy-in-hand Peter Sheeran (Michael Golden) and his widowed mother who defers to him in most things (Christine Silver); little brother Tim (John Murphy) is to have a good education and make better use of the boon than brother Francis (John Varley) whom political adventures have embittered, and whose encounters with the law—and whose unblesed alliance with Maeve (Barbara Waring)—are an offence to Peter and the Canon (Ian Sadler).

Peter's romance is a sad affair of good sense, for Rosemaryanne's butter making, her freedom from youthful folly, her father's ability to hand over so many cows, are factors that weigh heavily in her favour. She is a good girl of no mystery or excitement, and it says much for Helen Lacy's skill and sympathy that we can feel for her in her misfortunes. And that applies, too, to Edward Byrne's portrayal of her father, Phelim Fitzfagan.

To the quiet farm comes the splendid Maeve, mislaid by Francis; and Tim, Peter, Mrs. Sheeran and the big-souled, blarneying Dan Dorian (Billy Shine) fall like ninepins to her wayward charm. Peter's stiffnecked animosity melts like ice in flame. Dan finds in Maeve a willing devotee to his cult of the old Irish foolishness, his mist-and-moonlight worship, his one-man revival of the old-time romance and splendour of pagan living and loving. His are the best lines in the play and so charming a wastrel deserves them. His “Ould Contrary” mother (Chris Castor) gets less sympathy than her undoubted worthiness warrants.

Peter's unexpected tenderness and expansiveness, the blaze of his passion and the misery of his defeat at the hands of the better-loved Francis, give Michael Golden great scope. Ian Sadler's roaring, rapacious Canon is a joy. Dennis Arundell produces.

E.M.H.

(Continued on page 8)



EL COWARD—who has received a big welcome  
 to the West End in his two new plays *Present  
 Laughter* and *This Happy Breed*, which, seen in  
 sequence, convey perfectly their brilliant author's  
 astonishing versatility. As Garry, Mr. Coward  
 makes a wonderful impression of witty self-important  
 silliness, and by contrast extracts every ounce of  
 sympathy with his performance as Frank Gibbons  
 the good-tempered long-suffering philosopher in  
*This Happy Breed*. (Below): JOYCE CAREY who  
 makes two fine performances, particularly as Liz  
 Wendine in *Present Laughter*. (The season ends  
 at the Haymarket on July 3rd.)



John Vickers.



JUDY CAMPBELL contrasts the sophistication of  
 Joanna in *Present Laughter* with a most realistic  
 piece of acting as Ethel the pathetic wife in *This  
 Happy Breed*, and (left) JAMES DONALD who  
 almost stops the show with his more-than-life-size  
 study of Roland Maule, the eccentric introvert in  
*Present Laughter*, and appears again as the likeable  
 sailor Billy in *This Happy Breed*.



THE month's revivals have included two comedies, *Vintage Wine* at the Comedy and Frederick Lonsdale's *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney* at the Westminster.

It is useless at this stage to ponder the reason why this or that play should be selected for revival. The theatrical boom is such that, low though the mentality of theatregoers is commonly held to be, they could I think be expected to support a far greater number of more serious works.

The central figure in *Vintage Wine* was so obviously written for the highly individualised Sir Seymour Hicks that it seemed hardly fair to call upon any other actor to appear as Charles. Geoffrey Saville in fact makes quite a good job of it, and the younger generation certainly seems to get plenty of laughs out of the skittish grandfather of sixty-two who deceives his young second wife to the tune of some seventeen years. Beryl Mason, Barbara Shotter, Margaret Halstan, John Deverell, Gerald Fitzgerald and Alwyn D. Fox are among those who give lighthearted support in leading parts.

*The Last of Mrs. Cheyney* (presented from May 18th for two weeks only) was perhaps in happier vein, though the production lacked the modern tempo. Anna Farrer in the title role of ambitious shop girl turned crook was excellent, as was Henry Hewitt's butler, Charles, and the performances of David Horne, Philip Desborough, Gertrude Sterroll, Marion Fawcett and others.

(*Vintage Wine* was withdrawn on May 22nd.)

JOHN LAURIE is playing the part of Captain Shotover in the West End revival of Shaw's *Heartbreak House* during Robert Donat's absence through illness. Mr. Donat hopes to return to the cast later. In our last issue it was inadvertently stated that this play was at the Phoenix Theatre, whereas, of course, it is enjoying its successful run at the Cambridge.

TO show their appreciation of the help received from the British entertainment profession, the Polish Welfare Centre has offered to share the proceeds of an all-star concert, at the Phoenix Theatre on June 6th, with the Actors' Benevolent Fund and the Variety Artists' Benevolent Fund, each to receive one-third.

The organiser of the event is Ensign Diana Tauber, the actress wife (Diana Napier) of Richard Tauber.

FULL *Swing*, in which Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtneidge delighted London audiences for so long, finished its long and successful run at the Palace on May 29th to make way for the Jack Hylton revue *Hi-De-Hi*. Kenneth Kent left the cast of *Full Swing* shortly before the end of the run to appear as Napoleon in *The Duchess of Dantzic* at the Palace, Manchester.

## New Play by Monica Stirling

THE Amersham Playhouse in April and May presented a season of new plays, and of these *Perhaps Tomorrow*, by Monica Stirling, was specially interesting. Written by a daughter of Edward Stirling, for many years director of the English Theatre in Paris, the play reveals a passionate love of France and her people which, by its very force and the audience's awareness of the tragedy that is still being played out in this unhappy country, cannot fail to move. It is a story of France just prior to and during war, and in it the youth of four countries—France, England, America, Germany—are effectively contrasted. The young author has a distinct literary gift and a feeling—at present it is not much more—for character; but she must beware of a tendency to let her characters "speechify," with a use of long words and a political consciousness not always natural to the type of person presented. When Miss Stirling has learned to pare her dialogue and vary its style to suit the character, she shows promise of becoming an intelligent and valuable playwright.

There were three very good performances at Amersham. As Jeanne, the French girl who escapes from France and sacrifices a career as a pianist in order to work for the de Gaullists in England, Sally Latimer played with the burning sincerity that makes all her work moving; Elizabeth Sellars brought attack, charm and feeling to a wise-cracking American; and Caryl Jenner's Nazi-hypnotised German girl, muddled, stubborn, unhappily isolated, showed an arresting personality held quietly in check. It is a flaw in the play that the shooting of this wretched girl by the American strikes one as cold-blooded and horrible. Miss Jenner's production was inclined to be static, notably in an unnaturally-held tableau at a moment of suspense before the Act I curtain. The last-Act setting was excellent.

The Amersham policy, under the direction of Sally Latimer, of presenting an average of nine new plays a year makes it one of the more vital repertory theatres. The quality of the plays performed is less important than the encouragement given to a new generation of writers. New dramatists can only learn and improve by seeing their plays on the stage, and no art which lives mainly on the past is a vigorous art. If the future of the theatre is to be safeguarded, the writer of the future must be given opportunity for development.

A.W.



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*Sir Sampson*: Here's a rogue, brother Foresight.

Valentine's father, Sir Sampson Legend, harangues the prodigal.

*L-R*: Miles Malleon as Foresight, "an illiterate old fellow, pretending to understand Astrology, Palmistry, Physiognomy, Omens, Dreams, etc."; Cecil Truncer as Sir Sampson Legend; John Gielgud as Valentine, who has "fallen under his father's displeasure by his expensive way of living"; and Max Adrian as Jeremy, Valentine's servant.

## "Love for Love"

WILLIAM CONGREVE'S delicious comedy is revived at the Phoenix Theatre with all the audacity, wit and naughtiness associated with Restoration drama. Under John Gielgud's direction a distinguished cast make merry with the studied artificiality of the late 17th century, and enjoy every minute of it. True there is much harping on the one subject, but so far removed is that carefree world from the barren present, that nothing palls in so

graceful a work of art.

The atmosphere is enhanced by singer Eric Goldie's interpolated songs, Leslie Bridgewater's music and the delightful dance that marks the end of the play. Rex Whistler's settings are exquisite, a fitting background to Jeannetta Cochrane's lovely costumes. Once again C.E.M.A. are associated with H. M. Tennent, Ltd., in giving London a theatrical revival of great brilliance.





*Mrs. Frail (Yvonne Arnaud):*  
I shall get a fine reputation by  
coming to see fellows in a  
morning.

Mrs. Frail, half-sister to  
Mrs. Foresight, and a lady  
of somewhat easy virtue,  
calls to see Valentine at his  
lodgings.



*Nurse:* O you young harlotry.

The hoydenish Miss Prue is  
discovered with Tattle, the  
amorous fop. A scene  
from Act 1, Scene 2, in  
Foresight's house.

(Leslie Banks as Tattle, "a  
half-witted beau, vain of  
his amours, yet valuing  
himself for secrecy,"  
Naomi Jacob as the Nurse  
and Angela Baddeley as  
her charge, Miss Prue, an  
awkward ignorant country  
girl, daughter to Foresight  
by a former wife.)



*Mrs. Frail:* Pooh, here's a clutter.

*Mrs. Frail* arrives on the scene after the *Miss Prue* — *Tattle* fracas.

(Below):

*Tattle* entertains the company with an account of his amorous successes. A scene from Act I, Scene 3.



(Right):

*Mrs. Foresight* (Marian Spencer): Husband, will you go to bed? It's ten o'clock.

Old *Foresight's* attractive second wife, with a pleasant flirtation in sight, is eager to bundle her spouse off to bed.





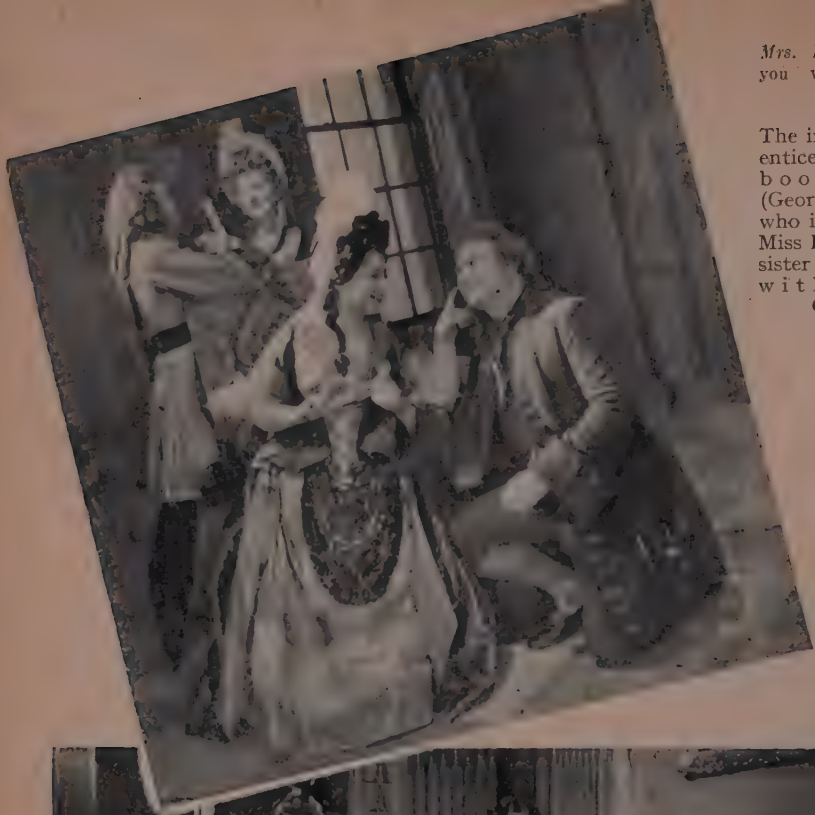
Mrs. Frail: Come, sir, will  
you venture yourself with  
me?

The irresistible Mrs. Frail  
entices Ben, Valentine's  
booby sailor brother  
(George Woodbridge),  
who is designed to marry  
Miss Prue, while her half  
sister Mrs. Foresight flirts  
with Scandal (Lester  
Quartermaine).

(Below):

Mrs. Foresight:  
You don't think  
to succeed in your  
design on me.

Mrs. Foresight  
and Scandal are  
left alone.





Valentine: Oh, why would Angelica be absent from my eyes so long.

The opening scene in Act 2. Valentine, unable to move his father on the painful subject of finance, and unsuccessful in his suit for Angelica's hand and heart, feigns madness to gain his ends.

Below, right):

Valentine: We'll be married in the dead of night, but say not a word.

Valentine takes great delight in pretending to be mad. He takes Mrs. Fraill for Angelica, when the two sisters call to see him.







*Tattle:* I hope you are secret in your nature. Private? Close? Ha?

*Jeremy:* O, sir, I am as secret as the head of Nilus.

Ever willing to serve his master's intrigues, Jeremy pretends to desert Valentine and go into Tattle's service.



*Prue:* I will have a man one way or another.

Miss Prue, who will have nothing to do with Ben, the sailor, proves a hand-ful after the interlude with Tattle.



*Tattle*: I am to be married, sir, married.

*Tattle*, fondly imagining he is going to marry Angelica, who is wealthy as well as lovely, repulses Miss Prue and mocks her father. Too late he discovers it is Mrs. Frail who keeps the assignment in place of Angelica.



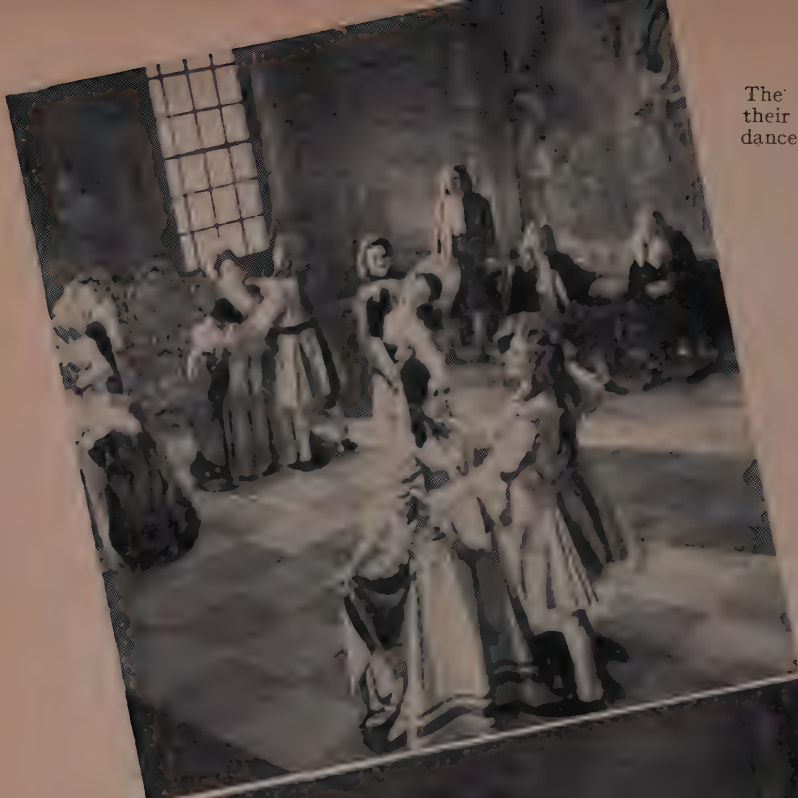
*Angelica* (Rosalie Crutchley): Here is my hand. My heart was always yours.

The many complications are straightened out and the lovers united at last.





The partners take  
their places for the  
dance that ends the  
play.



**The  
closing  
moments**

The end of the play  
—after the dance  
the couples sink ex-  
hausted into their  
chairs.







Not even the most devastating war in history has interrupted the launching of national theatre companies in Russia, and it is an impressive thought that Shakespeare is reaching vast new audiences in their own languages for the first time. (Above): A scene from *Othello* as presented by the Tadjik State Academic Drama Theatre.

## Shakespeare in the Kirghizian Language

MIKHAIL TARKHANOV (STALIN PRIZEWINNER, PEOPLE'S ARTIST OF THE U.S.S.R.) WRITES ON A FASCINATING ASPECT OF THE THEATRE IN RUSSIA.

**T**ALL young men with high cheekbones and dark-skinned faces, in picturesque hunters' dress with hats of shaggy fur, hesitatingly climbed the stairs of an ancient house in one of the Moscow by-streets. They were followed by some graceful sun-burnt girls wearing similar shaggy fur hats. Their white teeth flashed and their almond eyes sparkled with excitement. Sounds of heated throaty speech were heard. They were young Kirghizian men and women who had come to Moscow from their far-off native steppes to study theatrical art.

### House of Memories

The old house which they entered has its own history closely bound up with the history of the Russian Theatre. At the end of the 19th century it was occupied by the Moscow Philharmonic which trained young actors. Almost half of the Moscow Arts Theatre's oldest actors left these walls. In 1897 a slender young girl and somewhat bashful youth took their final examinations here. Years passed by during which their names were familiar throughout Russia and

then throughout the whole theatrical world. They were the future famous artistes of the Moscow Arts Theatre—Olga Knipper, who later became the wife of the writer Anton Chekhov, and Ivan Moskvin. The teacher who prepared them for their final examination was Vladimir Nemirovich Danchenko, who, a year later, in conjunction with Konstantine. Stanislavsky, founded the Moscow Arts Theatre. For a period of sixty-five years, theatrical art has been taught in this old Moscow house where thousands of Russian actors have received their dramatic education.

### Organising National Groups

After the great October revolution the preparation of young cadres of actors was organised on an extremely large scale. The State Institute of Theatrical Art—of which I am at present Art Director—was faced with new problems. One of the most important of these was the education of National actors; the organisation of complete theatrical groups for the National Republics composing the great Soviet Union.

*Continued overleaf*



Our Institute is a genuine theatrical school of many nationalities. Seven years ago the first National Studios—Ossetian and Yakutian—were completed. They left Moscow for their countries as complete theatrical companies with a unified style of performance and repertoire in their native tongue. After this first successful experiment, the Institute prepared over ten National Studios, including Kazakh, Kirghizian, Turkmenian, Uzbek, Tadzhik, Karakalpakian, Kabardino-Balkarian, and Chechino-Ingush.

### Shepherds and Miners

Who are these young students? Where do they come from? The majority of them are amateurs. Back home they were the best dancers and singers at the National festivals. Their professions are extremely varied. We have here shepherds from Kabardinobalkaria who tended large flocks on the verdant banks of the swift mountain streams, and young tillers of the soil from the broad steppes of Karakalpakia; the dark-skinned gatherers of "White Gold" (Cotton), cultivated on the collective farms of Turkmenistan; and muscular miners who dug "Black Gold" (Coal) in the mines of Karaganda; young school-teachers who taught boisterous children in the tents of Kirghizia, and sharp shooters and fearless horsemen from the mountain villages of Ossetia. On their collective farms in towns and villages at home they competed in contests of amateur actors from among which the most talented were chosen. Later teachers, actors and stage-producers would come from Moscow to select the most outstanding of these to send them to study theatrical art in the Capital.

### Gifted Young People

Among them are many gifted and truly talented young people. Nasir Kitayev distinguished himself during the very first lessons in Kirghizian studies. He was asked to prepare "Free Etude," an imaginative sketch. He skilfully depicted a shoemaker absorbed in his work, heatedly knocking nails into the sole of the shoe. His every gesture breathed truth, sincerity and passion. A young Balkarian, Akhmat Kudaev, previous to his departure for Moscow, tended collective farm herds in the far-off Chegem Gorge. He returned to his

native land a fully-fledged actor. A Karakalpakian, Baltabai Aimanov, who as a little child would pull out goats' hairs to make himself a beard and whiskers (the future actor was even then in evidence), now brilliantly plays the role of Scapin, in Molière's immortal comedy. Mekhiti Mamedov, a native of Azerbaïdian, is the son of a Baku weaver. In the Institute he displayed great talent as stage producer and on entering his third year, planned by himself a most interesting staging of *Macbeth*. A young Kazakh girl, Dzhamal Dzhamalymbetova, experienced such strong, deep stage emotions at performances that she actually grew pale under her make-up.

### Five Years' Training

After five years of study these young Kirghizians left Moscow in the autumn of 1940. They took with them a complete production of *King Lear* with all the attributes, decorations and costumes. Nasir Kitayev, the one who during the first lessons gave such a brilliant portrayal of the shoemaker, feelingly declaimed the monologue of the old Shakespearean King. They gave this play to their countrymen in the city of Eruze, Capital of their Republic. For the first time the words of the great English playwright sounded in the tongue of Kirghizian shepherds and hunters.

The Kirghizian Theatre staged its second Shakespearean play, *Twelfth Night*, in wartime, during the spring of 1943. This new production, born in days of unprecedented trials of war, speaks convincingly of the great vital force of the young National Theatre of the Soviet Union.

"Echoes from Broadway," by our American Correspondent, E. Mawby Green, unfortunately has not reached us in time for press this month. Last month Mr. Green mentioned two Russian war plays recently produced on Broadway, where interest in Soviet plays continues high. It was also of interest to learn that a short time ago Alla Tarasova, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R., a member of the Stanislavsky Company which first took Chekhov's plays to America, when playing "Masha" at the Arts Theatre in Moscow, cabled her greetings to Katharine Cornell, playing the same role in "The Three Sisters" in New York.

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## BALIOLO HOLLOWAY

as he appears as King Henry in "**King Henry the Fifth**" (the Birthday Play this year). Mr. Holloway has also produced *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in addition to the widely contrasted roles he is playing this season, which include, apart from those featured in these pages, Kent (in *King Lear*), Bottom, Autolycus and Sir Fretful Plagiary in *The Critic*.



The Festival is under the direction of Milton Rosmer, who takes over from B. Iden Payne who directed for eight years. Mr. Rosmer has produced *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *King Henry the Fifth* and Sheridan's comedy, *The Critic*. *The Winter's Tale* is produced by the well-known Shakespearean actress and ex-Bensonian, Dorothy Green, while Peter Cresswell (by courtesy of the B.B.C. and Cresswell-Fisher, Ltd., is responsible for *King Lear*. Albert Cazabon is Musical Director.

# Stratford-upon-Avon Festival

Our critic, **H. G. Matthews**, reviews three of this season's plays. Others in the repertoire are *King Henry the Fifth*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *King Lear*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Critic*.

**T**HE 1943 Shakespeare Festival opened at the Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, on April 17th, with *Twelfth Night*, performed before a full house. War-time conditions have made little noticeable change in the Shakespearean theatre, which has for many years depended upon tried veterans and young recruits to form its acting companies, with the addition, for a season, of one or two highly talented players whose names have become familiar to the public by virtue of their successes in more modern plays. The new Director, Milton Rosmer, therefore, it may be presumed, has not been unusually handicapped in casting the plays. Scenery and costumes left nothing to be desired and much credit for care and ingenuity in these departments must be accorded.

Great liberty, of doubtful warrant, was taken with the Palace of the love-lorn Duke of Illyria. It was not presented until the third scene, when it appeared to be a miniature seraglio in which four dancing girls rather abstractedly pirouetted. Orsino (Charles Reading), clad in Moorish garb, gave them scant attention and paced the stage with restless energy as he spoke the familiar opening lines of the play. Having decided upon this unusual rendering, it was wise not to begin the performance with it. Instead, as the orchestra played the closing bars of the overture, the curtains opened upon a bare, shallow stage, rather dimly lit, to which a backcloth, artistically decorated with masts and rigging, gave the appearance of a quay at evening. It was not what the audience were expecting, but it was



ABRAHAM SOFAER as Malvolio and PATRICIA JESSEL as Viola in "Twelfth Night."



ABRAHAM SOFAER as Lear and GEOFFREY WINCOTT as the Fool in "King Lear." In addition to the roles pictured Mr. Sofaer plays Iago, Pistol, Ford and Sir Ferolo Whiskerandos in *The Critic*; Mr. Wincott (former B.B.C. announcer) plays Sir Toby Belch and Puff in *The Critic*.



ANNA KONSTAM as Cordelia in "King Lear." Miss Konstam comes to Stratford from a notable career in Gordon Harker thrillers and light comedy, and in addition to playing Cordelia, Desdemona and Hermione (in *The Winter's Tale*) appears as Olivia, Kathérine (in *Henry V*) and Hermia.

romantic. Romantic, too, were the three figures who hurried on; two seamen and one in a long black cloak, whose question, "What country, friends, is this?" discovered her to be Viola. By introducing Patricia Jessel's Viola at the very beginning, the Director had, as it were, put down an ace and the trick was won. The part of Viola is, of course, a gift to an actress, but then, Miss Jessel is a gift to a Shakespearean producer. Her lines were spoken with subtle intelligence and she acted with sensitive

feeling. She has the rare gift of appearing at home in a romantic setting. All this given, her preposterous proposal to the old sea captain that he shall dress her as a boy and sell her as a eunuch to the Duke appears so natural that we do not cavil at the old man's very ready assent, since we are only too anxious for him to get on with it.

The addition of Abraham Sofaer to the Company this year is valuable and cannot fail to afford much satisfaction. He plays Malvolio quietly and dryly, giving the lines





ANNA KONSTAM as Desdemona and BALIOL HOLLOWAY as Othello in "Othello."



BALIOL HOLLOWAY as Falstaff in "The Merry Wives of Windsor." Mr. Holloway's happy rendering of the parts played with such success by Jay Laurier in recent years has aroused much interest.

PATRICIA JESSEL as Mistress Ford and ALISON PICKARD as Mistress Page in "The Merry Wives." Miss Jessel, niece of Lillah McCarthy, will be remembered in London for her outstanding performance as Viola in Granville-Barker's Season at the Savoy.

their proper value and truly presenting the author's creation. He is enabled to do this by reason of the nice restraint observed in the direction of his scenes. For instance, the garden scene in which Malvolio soliloquizes and finds the forged letter is sometimes marred by buffoonery. Not so in this production. Malvolio's lines, spoken so that we laugh with some sympathy at the man's day-dream, are our delight, heightened by the skilfully adjusted interpolations of Sir Toby and his followers

ensconced right away in the wings. Geoffrey Wincott's Sir Toby, Michael Madell's Sir Andrew and Vivien James' Maria sparkled with brilliance and put over the comic business whenever required with zest. Anna Konstam's somewhat modern Olivia was rather overweighted with entourage, introduced for purposes of pageantry in which it was very effective. An exceedingly pleasant entertainment was brought to a happy close by a new treatment of Feste's song, in which C. Rivers Gadsby, whose rendering



(Above): ANNA KONSTAM as Hermione, ABRAHAM SOFAER as Leontes and PATRICIA JESSEL as Paulina in "*The Winter's Tale*." (Miss Jessel also appears as Goneril, Emilia (*Othello*), Helena and Tilburnia in *The Critic*.)

(Right): CHRISTINE ADRIAN as Titania and CHARLES READING as Oberon in "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*." (Mr. Reading has also designed all the scenery for the Festival.)



of the songs was one of the best features of the production, had the support of Olivia's young ladies in a comedy ensemble, thus eliminating the note of wistful melancholy on which the play usually closes. We missed this haunting note, but we cannot have it both ways.

THE production of *Othello* was chiefly notable for Abraham Sofaer's Iago, who, equally at home with poetry and prose, was more obviously than usual the central figure of the tragedy, its architect and general motivator. It used to be the fashion among critics to object to Iago's "motiveless malignity" despite Shakespeare's introduction of motives of all kinds, practical, psychological and passionate, all which were made sufficiently apparent by this Iago. Baliol Holloway has an outstanding gift of naturalness in acting, but this did not prove a help in sustaining the tragic role of Othello and in consequence the tragedy threatened to slip into melodrama from time to time. The strangling scene was marred by Desdemona's leaving the bed for a space and then returning to it. Desdemona (Anna Konstam) had her best scene with her father Brabantio (Duncan Yarrow) when they met and parted in the Sagittary.

The play was considerably cut. *Othello's* epilepsy and Desdemona's Willow Song were omitted and the action was tautened by a cut at the end of Act 3 whereby Othello saw the handkerchief pass from Cassio to Bianco, instead of having to wait until Act 4 when in the text he sees Bianco return it to

Cassio. The last scene will probably be tidied up in the course of the Festival. At the first performance the grouping appeared haphazard and unhappy. Emilia (Patricia Jessel) was the only authentic figure of tragedy in the final scene.

A *MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S Dream* was certainly Bottom's play. Baliol Holloway produced the play efficiently on traditional lines and played Bottom all out in manner surpassing praise. Never, surely, was more mirth extracted from the brief tragedy of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe. All that might be made of this perfect material by a team of veteran comedians led by a master in the comic vein was made manifest for our delight. That the lovers did not tend slightly towards tediousness, if only by comparison with the artisans, testifies to the sprightly vivacity of their acting and the general efficiency of a balanced production. Helena and Hermia were nicely contrasted in the playing of Patricia Jessel and Anna Konstam. The fairies were as pretty as ever and special praise is due to Olive Kirby for a lively and attractive Puck.



# Why Always a Success Story ?

I AM bored with success stories. Most celebrated artists in the theatre like to leave a book behind them as a monument to their fame. They feel it is expected of them, and so we have an endless cavalcade of one success story after another, all written in the same key, as variations on the theme of Fame. All being turned out to the same formula, one has only to read a single volume in order to know just what to expect in each of the others.

Records of an artist's triumphs can make deadly dull reading. Pages devoted to curtain calls, dressing room homage, and celebration parties are as flat as last year's Society Gossip. The star flatters various celebrities in his book, hoping that they in turn will be delighted with the compliment and feeling that it is always good to be on the right side of them. They might adorn the stalls at his next first night or condescend to be photographed with him at a cocktail party and thereby raise his prestige a rung or two on the Ladder of Social Success.

## Reflected Glory

Other stars love to wallow in the reflected glory of a title. They enjoy showing off in front of their public by devoting whole pages to descriptions of dreary week-ends spent at Lady Zany's place and feeble dinner table conversation with the Honourable Namby Pamby and Lord Nincompoop. Had these people been successful small traders they would have been considered far too dull to mention. No star could be seen speaking to the ironmonger's wife or the greengrocer's assistant, and still less could she admit in her memoirs that she knew of the existence of such mediocrities.

The only interesting pages in these contemptible essays in snobbery are those devoted to early struggles when the star was still a nobody. When the artist writes about the days when no one believed in him and he had his back to the wall in his fight for recognition, then, and then alone, is there real drama and suspense in the narrative. The artist reveals himself on such occasions as a real man and not a mere hypocrite, anxious to scratch the backs of glittering figures in a useless world of High Society.

It seems odd, but nevertheless true, that as soon as these actor-authors reach the point in their book when they record the transition from a struggling beginner to a recognised star they seem to lose their heads. They acquire an artificiality, and the remainder of the book never rings as true as the earlier. Almost every book of theatrical memoirs I have read has proved an anti-climax. Noel Coward, John Van Druten, and John Gielgud, who all wrote

asks

*Eric Johns.*

autobiographies while still in their thirties, are three glorious exceptions, and their books should be studied by all future stars who intend to favour us with reminiscences.

When Barbette, the famous female impersonator and trapeze artist, was considering writing his memoirs on a farm in Texas a few years ago, he wrote to Anton Dolin: "*Too much has been written of the glamour and fascination of opening nights, applause, triumph, adulation, fame, and so little of the dreary struggles to get somewhere. Years of work, rehearsing, practising, hoping hopelessly against hope that your time will come, the unending succession of drab provincial towns, filthy dressing rooms, poor food, miserable hotels. We must indeed be a breed apart to survive it all.*"

I cannot understand why we should only expect established stars to write books on the theatre. Barbette's letter contains the germ of a best seller. Countless would-be stars fail, and if the genuine history of one of those failures could be recorded it would make a far more sensational book than any successful star's memoirs yet published. I am convinced there is scope for a masterpiece by someone who has failed in the theatre. The writer should be someone who has the courage to admit that he has chosen the wrong profession. It should be one who has shaken the dust of the theatre from his feet and may now be selling fish or cabbages.

## The Humbugs

Too often the would-be stars, even after their failure to make a name in the theatre, still remain in the rank and file, posing as unrecognised geniuses, merely because they are too proud and lazy to walk out of the theatre and earn an honest wage by some other means which they would consider far beneath their dignity. The theatre is lousy with humbugs who should never have been allowed to walk-on in the first instance. Yet with a suggestion of imagination and a fair command of the King's English, one of these poseurs could produce a book that would give a truer picture of the theatre than any of the previous star offerings. They could say just what they chose without any fear of offending influential managers, and there would be no necessity to scratch a single distinguished back. Their truth

(Continued on page 32)

# “June”



(Left): The opening scene the Graves' Apartment New York, showing Linda Gray as Grace Graves, Joan White as Judy, Roy Ward as Harry Graves and Peggy Simpson as Lois. Judy, the younger daughter, is writing an essay on life with rather embarrassing results. She has a lively imagination and a romantic schoolgirl outlook which has had some disastrous results for her mother and father. Lois, the elder daughter, just at the "boy-conscious" age, and innumerable gaudy young men are always turning up at the apartment during inconvenient moments.



Judy sees her father with Ellen Curtis (Betty Marsden), the over-worked daughter of his lawyer boss, "J. B.," and mistakes her father's intentions. She determines to save the situation.



Judy, upset by the affair, indulges in a little Yogi, just as Fuffy Adams (Peggy Cummins), her boisterous school friend, burst into the apartment. She tells Fuffy all about it.



# Miss "

at the SAVILLE

Scenes from the Firth Shephard production of the Jerome Chodorov and Joseph Fields successful comedy which has already enjoyed a long run on Broadway. The play is produced by Marcel Pagnol, and here is another lighthearted and charming piece to delight all ages.



(Above):

Willis Reynolds (Frank Leighton), Judy's uncle, about whose long absence there is some mystery, turns up unexpectedly, and is welcomed with great relish by his imaginative niece who takes it for granted that he has spent the ten years in gaol. Meantime, Hilda, the truculent maid (Peggy Hale), suspects Judy's motive in asking for some supper for Uncle Willis, knowing full well Judy's own appetite is never satisfied.



(Above):

uffy arrives on Christmas morning for the grand exchange of presents and to hear the latest news about Judy's father's affair. (Right): Judy, full of intrigues, engineers an introduction between her uncle and Ellen Curtis.





Judy and Fuffy watch Uncle Willis and Ellen Curtis from the window and note with satisfaction that the two seem to get on very well together.



Judy who had publicly scorned the doll J. B. Curtis had given her for a Christmas present, takes it up lovingly when she is left alone.



The unfortunate moment when Judy unwittingly tells J. B. Curtis about Uncle Willis and his daughter Ellen.

(Left):

Fuffy arrives bright and early on New Year's Day regardless of Mr. and Mrs. Graves' New Year's Eve "hangover."





Judy's little ruse worked very well and Uncle Willis and Ellen arrive at the apartment to announce their whirlwind marriage. Grace and Harry are taken completely by surprise and J. B. Curtis (who incidentally has been about to offer Harry a partnership) is enraged at the loss of his daughter, especially as Willis has a doubtful past and no prospects. A grand family row quickly develops (*see above*) and Judy begins to realise the havoc she has wrought. (*Above right*): Harry, sacked by J. B., brings back his personal belongings from the office. (*Right*): Judy hears her parents discussing their now desperate situation and is overcome by grief.

The enraged Mr. Curtis, still in search of his daughter, gets mixed up on arrival with Merrill Feurbach (Tony Hilton), one of Lois's boy friends, who is immediately expelled by an overwrought Harry. These increasing insults to her friends finally sends Lois into hysterics, which does not improve the general atmosphere.



Haskell Cummings (Pete Miller Street) calls to take Judy to a party. By stroke of luck, when he is announced before his arrival, J. B. thinks him to be Haskell Cummings, Sr., and suspecting Harry of making a deal behind his back, hurriedly relents, forgives his daughter and takes Harry into partnership. Imagine his surprise when Cummings, Junior, arrives. However, all well, and Judy, radiant in her white frock sets off happily for the party.





## AS WE GO TO PRESS

**SYDNEY HOWARD** and **CYRIL FLETCHER** returned to the West End on Thursday, May 7th, in Firth Shephard's new musical extravaganza, *Logic Carpet*, at the Prince's Theatre, produced too late for review this month.

The cast also includes Bave and Joe O'Gorman, Betty Astell, Graham Payn, Betty Warren, the Manjon Brothers and Juanita, Margerite and Charles, Kay and Kim Kendall, Patricia Stainer, Stella Moya, Gavin Gordon, Hazel Ascot, Sidney Pointer, and Prudence Hyman.

The "book" is by Austin Melford and Douglas Furber, the music by Manning Sherwin, the dances by Ann Coventry and Keith Lester and the whole production devised and staged by Robert Nesbitt.

**ON** Tuesday, May 25th, Lee Ephraim and Emile Littler re-opened the Duke of York's Theatre with *Shadow and Substance* by Paul Vincent Carroll. This play won the New York Critics Award for the best play of its year. The role of Canon Skerritt, created by Sir Cedric Hardwicke, will be played by Malcolm Keen, with Joyce Redman as Brigid. Other members of the cast are Megs Jenkins, Mona Harrison, Maude Lambert, Benis Carey, Harry Hutchinson, Tony Quinn, Edmund Byrne and Grenville Darling.

(Right):

### JOYCE REDMAN

who is playing Brigid in *Shadow and Substance* by Paul Vincent Carroll, at the Duke of York's theatre. The play is directed by Hugh Hunt, who staged the original production at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. It is presented by Lee Ephraim and Emile Littler, who gave *Claudia* to London.

The action takes place in the house of Canon Skerritt in Ardmahone, a small town lying at the foot of the Mourne hills in County Louth.

**INTIMATE** revue returns to the Ambassadors Theatre on June 10th, when J. W. Pemberton, in association with A. A. Dubens, will present *Sweet and Low*, starring Hermione Gingold and Walter Crisham. Other members of the cast are Edna Wood, Ilana Sylva, Brenda Bruce, Bonar Colleano, Graham Penley and Richard Curnock.

The revue is produced by Charles Hickman, with dances arranged by Andrée Howard and décor and costumes designed by Berkeley Sutcliffe. *Sweet and Low* is written by the cream of revue talent, including Eric Maschwitz, Nicholas Phipps, Geoffrey Wright, Harold Purcell, Jack Strachey, Leslie Julian Jones and Alan Melville. It will have two preliminary weeks, at Cambridge and Brighton, before the Ambassadors Theatre.

**ESTHER MCCracken's** new play, *Living Room*, opens at the Garrick Theatre on June 9th after a week at Newcastle. The cast includes Louise Hampton, Jane Baxter, Philip Cunningham, Lloyd Pearson, Nellie Bowman, Eileen Beldon, Fred Groves, Dorothy Millar, Charles Lamb and Keith Shephard. It is directed by Esther McCracken, whose *Quiet Week-End* enters its third year at Wyndhams Theatre on July 22nd, thus providing by far the longest run in the history of Wyndham's. Other Linnit and Dunfee plans include *She Follows Me About*, a comedy by Ben Travers, with Robertson Hare, Basil Radford, Catherine Lacey, Jean Millie and Joyce Heron in the cast, opening Whit Monday at Birmingham and doing an eight weeks' tour before coming to town; and a new play which Patrick Hamilton is writing for Gordon Harker.

**JACK BUCHANAN's** new musical play, *It's Time to Dance*, is breaking records everywhere during its prior-to-London tour. The cast is headed by Jack Buchanan, Elsie Randolph, Fred Emney, Marjorie Brooks and Buddy Bradley. It is at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, for two weeks beginning May 31st.

(Continued on page 32)



John Vickers.

(Right):

### HERMIONE GINGOLD

brilliant revue artiste, who co-stars with Walter Crisham in *Sweet and Low*, the new intimate revue coming to the Ambassadors on June 10th.



(Left):

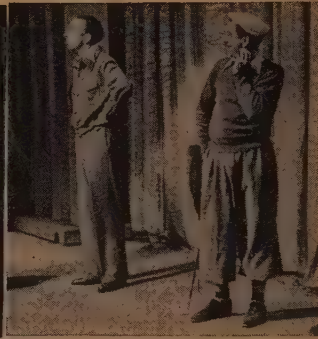
### PHILLIP BARRETT

thirty-year-old actor-manager, who, invalided out of the army two years ago, is now presenting a season of plays at the Scala. The first play which opened on Easter Monday, was *Rebecca*, in which Mr. Barrett played "Maxim de Winter," and he hopes to stage interesting new plays as well as revivals.



# Whispers from the Wings

BY  
LOOKER ON



SID FIELD in three scenes from *Strike a New Note* at the Prince of Wales. Left, with Jerry Desmond in "Anglo-American Relations"; centre, in "I'm Going to Get Lit Up"; and right, in his funniest turn "Following Through," with Jerry Desmond.

**T**HE West End is not given to making stars overnight in war-time. That quite common phenomenon of the peace is a rare event now, so naturally Sid Field was not a little surprised at the wild acclaim which greeted his West End debut at the Prince of Wales.

I met Mr. Field after a good deal of the initial shouting had died away and found him rather amused at it all in a quiet sort of way. "I can just imagine," he said, "some of the managers in the Midlands and North saying, 'What, old Sid Field a discovery. Sid Field! We've known him for years.'" Yes, Mr. Field has a big reputation in the Provinces, and it was not to be expected that one so experienced should have his head turned very easily. He is a good talker and, unlike many comedians, has a fund of good anecdotes off-stage to put you at your ease.

All the same it was difficult to associate with this big, friendly—even homely—man, the amazing comedy versatility shortly to be put over on the stage. It occurred to me that the straight theatre was missing its biggest character-actor, for dialects are as easy to Mr. Field as breathing itself, and like all good comedians he has a strong sense of the dramatic (and the irresistible hankering to play something serious, though not Hamlet, he hastened to add).

Mr. Field told me some interesting things about the serious art of making people laugh. "How do you find West End audiences," I asked (strictly speaking Mr. Field has played in London before, having reached the outskirts). "They are too easy, but I like them," was his quick reply. "It is a bit disconcerting though to be greeted with roars of laughter almost

immediately I step on the stage. In some towns up North now it is the accepted thing to walk on to stony faces and a general atmosphere of 'we dare you to try and make us laugh.' That's hard work, but its worth it. Of course," added Mr. Field, "to be funny when you are 100 per cent. fit is grand, but try it when you are off colour!" I hastened to agree; personally when I am under the weather I find it a superhuman task to be just ordinarily pleasant.

In Mr. Field I knew I had met a worthy member of the grand race of comedians, and what pleased me most was his obvious pride in the fact that his humour is always absolutely clean. And the West End seems to like that too.

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# AMATEUR STAGE

## Notes and Topics

AT a time when the professional theatre, especially in London, is not adding to its laurels by reviving old pieces to cash in on the wave of war-time prosperity, it is interesting to note that amateurs have welcomed one of the few war-time new productions of the West End. This is *Ladies In Retirement*, also just given the distinction of a three-week consecutive run by Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

Woolwich Polytechnic Operatic Society is one of the musical groups in the London area needing new playing members, men and women.

On June 5th, at Plaistow Little Theatre, Red Triangle Club, Greengate Street, E.13, the Little Theatre Players will perform at

6.30 p.m. Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. There is no admission charge, but a collection will be made to meet a winter deficit. In the first interval Mr. J. V. Poulson, who knew Ibsen personally, will give an address on the dramatist. Applications for invitations should be addressed to the Little Theatre.

THE experience of a dramatic society formed to provide a social activity for war workers evacuated from the Midlands may be of interest. It is to be found in the first annual report of the Viking Players, of Barnoldswick. The first object of the group was to provide entertainment in a district where no professional theatre existed; second, to meet the needs of those who wished to act.

Local amateur groups co-operated with performances while the Viking Players were finding their feet, and the policy of co-operation was subsequently reflected in a total of 56 performances, including amateurs and professional C.E.M.A. companies.

The Viking Players have given nine full length plays, *Libel*, *The Case of the Frightened Lady*, *Quiet Wedding*, *The First Mrs. Fraser*, *Gas Light*, *George and Margaret*, *White Cargo*, *Bird in Hand* and *Night Must Fall*. Nine one-act plays have been given.

The company build their own sets from limited material. "The work has involved intense spare time effort, but there is no doubt it has had a stimulating effect, beneficial to the war effort."

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## Why Always a Success Story?

(Continued from page 23)

would certainly be stranger than any fiction, and apart from making excellent reading, would be a valuable record of theatre conditions in our time for the benefit of future historians.

The searcher for stardom would tell of the loneliness, the depression, and the frustration that is the lot of all unknowns who try to make their unfamiliar voices heard in the theatre, where nothing succeeds like success, and where there is no room for beginners. In other professions one works, passes exams, and then claims a right to start on the bottom rung of the ladder. But not in the theatre, where one's beginning seems to depend entirely upon one's luck in meeting the right person at the right time.

### Creating an Impression

The story would tell of scheming by midnight oil to get managers sufficiently interested to offer that all-important first chance; and then of subsequent striving to make good and to justify the faith the manager had placed in an unknown. It would tell of the mask that has to be worn abroad to give the impression of a good financial reserve, even though the poor wretch may have to eat dry toast for days in a Soho attic to make possible an occasional visit to the Savoy Grill or the Ivy in order to be seen by "the right people" who weave the destiny of the theatre with their ruthless fingers on the spinning wheel of chance.

I know an actress who used to bath a bed-ridden crone every morning before she set off on her round of the Agents' offices in search of work. It was a most distasteful task, but it paid her rent each week and gave her a glorious feeling of independence as she faced one rebuff after another. Such an incident would make magnificent reading in an autobiography of a nobody. She might go on to tell how she had her teeth straightened; had her feet treated to prevent "going over" in high heeled shoes; and had skin treatment to refine the coarse texture of her complexion. Such steps make the would-be star more marketable and if physical defects and unfortunate idiosyncrasies are neatly camouflaged the managerial eye tends to look more favourably upon the applicant for stardom.

### The Endless Heartbreaks

Even after securing the golden first chance the artist may not be able to hold it. She may lack the power to grip an audience or the mental armour to withstand the endless heartbreaks of the theatre—heartbreaks which are the inevitable lot of beginner and

star alike. Failure stares her full in the face; ambition lies in ashes at her feet; and when all seems lost, few are strong enough to resist the temptation of becoming cynics, useless to themselves and everyone else.

Yet I still hope that sometime one of these so-called failures will look upon her unfortunate experience in the theatre as godsent "copy," and if she has the sense to record it without exaggeration she can be pretty certain of producing a book that will be a shattering best seller.

In their comfortable retirement old Gaiety stars who turned out stereotyped books about their triumphs in the Naughty Nineties, will hardly be able to disguise their envy as they glance down the book advertisements and see announcements to the effect that the life of a failure and a nobody has run into five editions and is still reprinting.

### The Power of Truth

Contemporary stars might also learn a lesson by coming to realise that truth and sincerity make good reading. In consequence the next success story to be published might be all the more attractively written, just because an unknown girl tried to become a star, and getting nowhere beyond a maid's part in a third rate twice nightly touring company, thought she would take up her pen and tell the world all about it.

## AS WE GO TO PRESS

(Continued from page 29)

**WESTMINSTER** Hospital is to benefit by the entire proceeds of a special performance by Mr. Donald Wolfit and his company of Molière's famous comedy *Le Malade Imaginaire* in English, to be given at the Westminster Theatre on Monday evening, May 31st. The play, freely adapted from the French by F. Anstey, will open for a four-weeks' run at this theatre on the following evening, Tuesday, June 1st, with the title *The Imaginary Invalid*.

Mr. Wolfit's generosity in arranging this performance for Westminster Hospital's funds recalls the public spirit he showed during the blitz on London when, most theatres having closed, he and his company gave a series of 100 performances of *Lunchtime Shakespeare* at the Strand Theatre, working in dressing-rooms which had been bombed and not repaired, to give Londoners relief and stimulation in those trying months.

**THE** Old Vic Company is presenting on June 9th Konstantin Simonov's *The Russians* following the run of *Abraham Lincoln* at the Playhouse, the proceeds of the first night going to the Joint Committee for Soviet Aid to endow an Old Vic bed in Stalingrad hospital.

**H**I-DE-HI, Jack Hylton's new revue, comes to the Palace on June 3rd.

**PHILLIP BARRETT'S** second production at the Scala is *Peg o' My Heart* which opened on May 27th, too late for review this month.



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